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ABSTRACT

The problems of at-risk students will require diversity in intervention strategies that are implemented to address their problems. This paper reviews three alternative educational strategies that may be used successfully with at-risk students: (1) independent study; (2) home schooling; and (3) programs designed to meet the needs of homeless students. Independent study programs incorporate many characteristics of effective alternative schools. The approach may not be successful for all at-risk students, but the potential of the approach is clear. Home schooling is another approach that should be studied in an effort to provide a free public education for all students. School restructuring efforts need to consider the needs of home schooling families and develop mutually acceptable programs. A special population of at-risk students are those from homeless families. The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act was the first real recognition by the federal government that homelessness is a problem deserving national attention. Attention to the needs of homeless children is an area in which administrators must take the lead in training school personnel. (Contains 42 references.) (SLD)

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Extending the Environments for Learning: Expanding the Practice of School Leadership to Meet the Needs of At-Risk Students and Special Interest Groups

By Dr. Cheryl Fulton Fischer and Dr. B. Gale George

ED 383 792

The Scope of the Problem

For the purposes of this paper, the term "at-risk" is used to define the place, circumstance, school, family, or community, that puts a student in jeopardy of not achieving in the conventional school program. The number of students who could be considered in settings which put them "at-risk" of school failure has increased in recent years, as has their degree of disadvantage (Levis, 1989; Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989). Researchers have identified factors that most often describe students who drop out of school. According to Hafner, Ingels, Schneider, & Stevenson (1990) about 41% of black and 37% hispanic eighth graders have two or more factors which put them "at-risk." This could include family issues like being from a single-parent home, having siblings who dropped out of school, or home alone after school three or more hours a day. The factors could also be a variety of school or community factors. Frymier and Gansneder (1989) report that nearly one third of students were identified as having 6 or more out of a possible 45 risk risk factors. In a study of 10-17 year olds, 25% were identified by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development as being extremely vulnerable to multiple high-risk behaviors including school failure and substance abuse and another 25% were considered to be at moderate risk. Statistics reported by the popular press are startling. Each year 700,000 students drop out of high school costing the nation more than $240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes. By the year 2000, the bulk of the labor force will come from minority-group students; 40% of whom are now considered functionally illiterate. Each year nearly half a million teenagers give birth and half of them never complete high school and many end up on welfare. Ninety percent of black teenage mothers are unmarried at the time of their child's birth and only 33% eventually marry.

The problem of students at risk is is clearly of such magnitude that it needs to be addressed. It becomes evident from reviewing the demographic data that the wide range of students categorized as "at-risk" will require diversity in intervention strategies that are implemented to address their problems.

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School-Related Problems that Affect Students at Risk

Several researchers addressing the at-risk student issue have reframed the problem from a focus on the student and his/her characteristics, to a focus on the school system, school programs, organizational and institutional features of schools, or structural or environmental conditions that influence students' failure (Boyd, 1991; Cuban, 1989a, 1989b; Kagan, 1990; Meacham, 1990; Pellicano, 1987; Sinclair & Ghory, 1987; Wehlage et al , 1989). Because it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the factors that define at-risk students and hard to isolate the variables, these researchers identified features that alienate students and drive them out of school rather than keeping them in school. Richardson and her colleagues (1989) moved from an epidemiological model to a social constructivist model because they found that a large number of students who are classified as "at-risk" in certain educational situations could be quite successful when classrooms and social characteristics changed.

Although Levin (1990) found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds typically begin school behind their advantaged classmates, school structures were found by Wang to contribute to the problem (1990). The literature suggests that the disadvantaged students who are behind when they enter school or learn at a slower rate will show "progressive retardation" as they continue in school (Reynolds, 1989; Walberg, 1988). Implications of the findings suggest that programs that are beneficial for all students may have more positive effects for those students who are initially advantaged causing the students at risk to fall further behind (Walberg, 1989). One problem is that at-risk students are often taught less than they are capable of learning (Knapp & Shields, 1990). Another finding shows that teachers interact with low-achieving students differently, calling on them only to answer low-cognitive level questions or wait less time for them to respond. Several studies, including one by Edmonds (1986), have found that teachers have different expectations for students at risk and those in "ineffective" schools. He also found that teachers varied their instruction according to students' sex, race, or social class.

Teachers and students share the school environment and each group is dependent upon the other to meet its needs. Teachers who feel isolated, alienated and burnt out, especially those in urban schools who experience a high level of physical, psychological, and professional isolation, feel

disengaged and this feeds the alienation of students (Dworkin, 1986; Firestone, 1989).

The climate of the school either facilitates or constrains instruction and learning (Shields, 1991; Sinclair and Ghory, 1987). School environments that alienate students and teachers, have low standards, maintain differential expectations, have high dropout, truancy, and disciplinary rates, and are unresponsive to students, should be considered environments at-risk of not meeting the learning needs of students. Although students can be exposed to inappropriate experiences that have a negative effect on education in the family and community, these conditions cannot be greatly changed by educators. Educational policy and practices can be modified to improve the education of students at risk (Comer, 1987; Pallas et al, 1989). In support of this approach, researchers have found that the school effect is more powerful than that of the family, the neighborhood or cultural environment of the community (Edmonds, 1986). Therefore, this paper will specifically focus on students, school environments, and ways educators can alter or modify these environments to improve students' cognitive and affective outcomes.

Effective School Programs and Classroom Practices

The conclusion that school programs and classroom practices may be influential in either placing or not placing students at risk prompts an interest in identifying the approaches that are effective. The literature endorses a rich array of approaches to which we should attend in planning and funding programs. Implicit in the programmatic literature are five general types of ideal school programs and practices. These include supplemental programs, whole-school restructuring programs, therapy programs, intervention team approaches, and community/home/school partnership programs. Supplemental programs can take many different forms and are not the common response to meeting the needs of at-risk students. Jones, Pollock, and Marockie (1988) describe an all-day kindergarten program which their data indicate helped children overcome behaviors that led to failure. A supplemental summer program was found to reduce summer learning loss among at-risk students.

Pull-out programs, similar to those used to deliver services in Chapter 1 were found by Carter (1984) to have limited effects which did not hold over time.

It was found that this conclusion held even when small groups of Chapter 1 students were taught in the regular classroom. Slavin's review of the literature (1989) suggests that only one-to-one tutorial programs and individually adapted computer-assisted instruction is effective with at-risk students.

In a study of effective alternative schools and school-within-schools, Wehlage and his colleagues (1986, 1987, 1989) compiled a list of common characteristics: small enough school populations (twenty-five to one hundred) to allow for personalized face-to-face relations between staff and students; a sense among students of ownership of the school programs and responsibilities for their own learning; a sense of community among students; a sense of commitment to learning; voluntary participation by both students and staff in the program; applications for admission and dismissal for inappropriate behavior; individualized approaches to instruction geared toward mastery of clearly identified objectives; prompt feedback; active student participation in the classroom; experiential learning opportunities outside of school; joint decision making and cooperation by teachers.

Educators have attempted to respond to the needs of at-risk students by altering the entire school's structure. School restructuring efforts have taken a wide variety of forms. Most have included some form of site-based management, although implementation can take many forms. It can be principal-directed or incorporate various forms of shared decision making.

In the sections that follow, this paper will include an overview of program implementation strategies future principals should be trained to utilize when administering three selected alternative programs including independent study, home schooling, and educational programs designed specifically to meet the needs of homeless students.

Alternative Educational Strategies

The next section of this paper will focus on alternative educational strategies which may be used successfully with at-risk students. These specifically include independent study and home schooling programs. While not all home schooled students would be considered "at-risk," the nature of removing a child from the traditional education setting presents an opportunity and perhaps a responsibility on the part of the local school district to develop an educational program which provides access to district-adopted curriculum and

instructional materials as well as regular contact with certificated instructional personnel. The population of home schooled students in America continues to grow, challenging the traditional educational community to reexamine current practices or provide opportunities for this segment of school age children and youth to experience academic success.

Independent Study

Introduction

One educational option, which provides students for whom any number of at-risk factors can be identified an opportunity to experience success, is independent study. Independent study is an instructional strategy which presents curriculum using an individualized and self-paced approach. Independent study curriculum is primarily completed outside of the traditional educational setting.

Students may enroll in independent study for a variety of reasons, however, each has the same goal, the completion of a prescribed course of study. Programs are structured to be responsive to the unique and differing needs of the population served.

Independent study is a self-paced educational alternative where students complete assignments at home. Students then meet regularly with a teacher to submit completed assignments, take tests, discuss new assignments, and receive necessary instructional assistance.

Courses offered through independent study are self-paced, allowing students to progress through the curriculum as quickly as assignments can be satisfactorily completed. Likewise, students have the opportunity to spend additional time as necessary to compiete courses where difficulty is being experienced and additional study is required for mastery of major concepts and skills.

Students are able to complete a full course of study through an independent study program. Courses such as lab sciences and foreign language, which may not always be available through independent study, may be taken concurrently at the local comprehensive high school or community college.

Independent study may not be limited to students in grades 7 - 12. Many programs are designed to meet the needs of all students, including those in

grades K - 6. Independent study is an exciting option for elementary students who are involved, for example, in the entertainment industry, whose parents travel extensively for employment or other reasons, or whose parents have chosen to educate them at home. Elementary students who need a brief time out from the comprehensive program are also able to benefit from an independent study option.

Reasons for Enrollment

Students who enroll in independent study do so for a variety of reasons. For at-risk students, this educational alternative:

* provides an opportunity for more self-directed, self-controlled learning;
* provides an opportunity to combine educational and work experiences;
* provides an opportunity for pregnant minors and teenage parents to reach the goal of graduation;
* provides an opportunity for students who are seriously ill and/or undergoing extensive treatment to maintain an uninterrupted education.

Independent study also allows students enrolled in a comprehensive educational program to earn additional credits in a course or courses not offered at the local high school. Students may choose independent study as a means to complete in-depth research in an area of special interest. This alternative also provides a means for students who have the opportunity to travel during the traditional school year to continue their education during the time they are traveling.

The California Department of Education (1993) identifies the following types of students who may benefit from an independent study approach:

* average students who may need to resolve a scheduling conflict;
* specialized students who are extraordinarily creative, talented, or gifted in a particular field;
* students with academic deficits;
* students with disabilities and special needs;
* students who drop out;
* students in the juvenile justice system;
* students who travel;

* home study students [students who are home schooled];
* students who need different learning strategies (CDE, 1993, p. 3-1 - 3-4).

Program Operation

Independent study is an instructional strategy and, therefore, may be offered to students via a variety of educational settings. For example, independent study may be offered as a school-within-a-school, as a district or county alternative, as a school-based program, as an alternative school-based program or as an off-site program (CDE, 1993, p. 1-3). Independent study may also be offered through a separate school for which this strategy is the singular instructional methodology.

Curriculum in an independent study program is developed and packaged in a manner which supports the concept of independent and individualized work. Work may be organized into short "packets" or presented as an entire semester or year-long course. In whatever manner the curriculum is organized, students must be able to progress through a course of study individually and through their own motivation. Curriculum should be multi-level, meeting the differing skill needs of the student population. Students enrolled in independent study may represent all aspects of the traditional program from special education to G.A.T.E. and the curriculum must reflect the educational needs of all participating students supporting their efforts to experience success.

In many independent study programs, students earn unit credit toward graduation as assignments are satisfactorily completed. For example, a student who, at the end of the first grading period (this may be one attendance month), has completed the equivalent of 2.0 credits in English III, 2.5 credits in Algebra I, 2.0 credits in U.S. History, and 1.5 crèdits in physical education, will actually be awarded these credits. This means that if this student, at the end of this grading period, transfers to another district, these earned credits will appear on the student's transcript. In this way, students who have not previously experienced academic success are able to see their progress immediately. This immediate feedback is often a significant motivator for at-risk students.

An advantage of any alternative educational program, and most definitely of independent study, is the ability to provide school hours which are

responsive to the needs of the students enrolled in the program. Independent study programs do not need to follow the traditional 6 1/2 hour school day, operating from, for example, 7:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Rather, these programs may be open from early in the morning until late in the evening, allowing students with varying personal schedules to attend. Independent study programs frequently employ part-time instructional staff, permitting flexibility in operating hours. Thus student attendance may be arranged around divers needs such as student work schedules, parents' work schedules, or babysitting needs.

Independent study programs, as with all educational alternatives, may offer a variety of school calendars. Many programs may operate utilizing the district or county's traditional school year. It is also possible to implement a single or multiple-track year-round school calendar. The year-round option could provide an opportunity for students to attend for remediation during an intersession program. It is conceivable that an independent study alternative could operate on a twelve-month calendar, allowing students to complete a prescribed course of study more quickly and either graduate or return to the comprehensive program.

Frequency of meetings with teachers should be determined by discussions with teacher, student, and parent, and by state, county, and/or district requirements. In many instances, students do not need to be physically present to meet with the teacher. Students who are travelling, for example, may use the mail or fax to maintain regular contact with the teacher. Home schooling parents, or parents with transportation difficulties, may use the telephone to report progress to the teacher. Whatever the method utilized, the frequency of direct interaction with the teacher must be determined by the individual needs of the student to optimize the opportunities for success.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of this approach to instruction is the opportunity for the staff to become more than just acquainted with their students. Independent study staff, as is often true in all educational alternatives, become counselors as well as teachers. Many times it is more important to spend a one hour meeting understanding the student's non-academic needs than it is to discuss *Romeo and Juliet* or the Civil War. Teachers in these programs, because contact is frequently one-on-one, are able to invest the time required to know their students as individuals, not just as students.

Enrollment in an independent study alternative requires careful consideration by students, parents, and educational professionals. The very

nature of this alternative requires participants to be self-motivated and independent learners. Parents need to be committed to providing support, both educational and moral. An appropriate study area should be provided, with the tools required for maximum learning. Parents should be willing and able to assist their students in establishing and maintaining a daily "school" schedule. Parents of elementary students enrolled in independent study assume the responsibility of instructional aide for their children, providing day-to-day instructional assistance.

In many districts, transfer to this type of educational alternative requires the involvement of administrators, counselors, teachers, parents, and students. This may take the form of a committee of educational professionals, similar to a Student Study Team, with whom the parents and students are required to meet. Responsibilities of everyone involved in the student's education, the student, parents, teachers, and administrators, are clearly explained. District, county, and/or state requirements are discussed. A recommendation is then made which reflects the best educational interest of the student. In other districts, less formal procedures involving direct communication between the referring school and the independent study program may be policy.

Participation in an independent study alternative should be voluntary. Neither students nor staff, certified or classified, should be required to transfer to an independent study program. Students need to understand and accept the personal commitment that is an integral part of a self-paced, self-directed instructional program. To force a student who is unwilling or unable to assume this responsibility may result in continued at-risk behavior.

The staff of an independent study program should possess a unique set of characteristics. Working with at-risk students requires an understanding of the circumstances which may have resulted in at-risk behavior. The Independent Study Operations Manual, 1993 Revised Edition published by the California Department of Education (1993) lists the following attributes which are characteristic of effective independent study staff:

* genuinely empathetic toward all students but particularly toward the underachieving student;
* creative and flexible in dealing with the wide variety of students who enter the program ;
* able to interact with and provide in-service assistance to parents;
* reliable, self-directed, and self-motivated;

* good listeners and skilled counselors;
* academically prepared in one or more of the following areas: English, mathematics, social studies, science, counseling, and work experience;
* strong in curriculum development;
* respected by peers;
* familiar with the community and community resources and services that can be used
* skilled in recordkeeping and accurate with paperwork;
* proficient in meeting deadlines (p. 4-3).

Clearly care must be taken in selecting staff to work with students in option for at-risk students. Staff who are placed involuntarily in such a program may not invest the time nor the personal dedication required to assist students in successfully completing required assignments.

Summary

Independent study programs offer students an opportunity for success. These programs incorporate many of the characteristics of effective alternative schools identified by Wehlage and his colleagues (1986, 1987, 1989): small enough school populations to allow for personalized, fact-to-face relations between staff and students; a sense among students of ownership of the school programs and responsibilities for their own learning; a sense of community among students; a sense of commitment to learning; voluntary participation by both students and staff in the program; individualized approaches to instruction geared toward mastery of clearly identified objectives; prompt feedback; experiential learning opportunities outside of school; and joint decision making and cooperation by teachers.

While this approach to instruction may not be appropriate for all at-risk students, the potential for success is clear. Administrators must be able to step out of the traditional and into the new and exciting if the needs of at-risk student populations are to be met.

Home Schooling

Introduction

An ever-growing number of families over the past 20 years have chosen to remove their children from the public school system and educate them at home (Knowles, Marlow, and Muchmore 1992). Estimates of the number of students involved in home-based education have ranged from tens of thousands to as many as one million (Daubenmier 1990; Holt 1984; Lines 1989; Moore 1985; Ray 1989).

The concept of home schooling is not a phenomenon of the 20th century. Children have been schooled at home throughout the history of this country. According to Guterson (1990), "teaching one's own was the norm in the United States until the 1850s" (p. 59). Compulsory education, however, is a concept that began in Massachusetts in the middle of the 19th century (Churbuck, 1993, p. 148). Such political, literary, and scientific leaders as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Mark Twain, Margaret Mead, and Thomas Edison received their educations at home (Churbuck, 1993, p. 145 ; Guterson, 1990, p. 58). It should not be surprising that there are parents today who believe that their children might learn better if taught at home.

In a recent study of home schooling families in urban Utah, J. Gary Knowles identified four major rationales parents gave for home schooling which "were imbedded in (a) family experience as children; (b) school and learning experiences in childhood; (c) perceptions of conflict with public school practices, beliefs, and environments; and (d) the formulation of pedagogical beliefs about homes being better places than schools for children's learning," (Knowles 1991, p. 211). As Knowles (1991) indicates, the last two rationales are those supported in existing literature (Gustafson 1981; Gustafson 1987; Linden 1983; Van Galen 1986; Williams et. al. 1984). Churbuck (1993) believes that the majority of parents home school for religious reasons. He adds, however, that the rapidly growing portion of home schooling families are "the parents who think their children can learn more at home than in a classroom controlled by bureaucrats and staffed with heavily unionized teachers" (p. 145).

The rationales presented by Knowles (1991) may not be the only reasons parents have selected to home school their children. Guterson (1990)

states that "Few people realize that the homeschooling movement is populated by a large number of educators or ex-educators -- parents who teach or who have taught in the schools but keep their children out of them" (p. 59).

Whatever the reasons are that result in parents choosing to school their children at home, an opportunity exists for public school officials to open dialogue with this powerful and influential group. Such a dialogue may result in partnerships being established between home schooling families and districts or county offices of education.

Partnerships

Requirements for families to participate in home schooling vary among the states. In Michigan, for example, parents who teach their children at home are required to possess a state teaching certificate unless the home schooling is for religious reasons (Churbuck, 1993, p. 148). Parents in California are required to obtain and file a private school affidavit with the local county office of education declaring the home as a private school. This affidavit requires the parents to identify the school's administrator(s), teacher(s), grade levels to be taught, and the number of students in each grade level.

Many districts have made steps toward recognizing home schooling families as part of the school districts. Many districts in Utah, for example, allow home schooled children access to district facilities such as gymnasiums and libraries. Other school systems, such as Dallas, ban home schooled students from these facilities (Churbuck, 1993, p. 148).

Still other districts and county offices of education have established programs similar to independent study which work closely with home schooling families. These programs may be part of an existing independent study program or may be uniquely established to work specifically with home schooling parents to offer a wide variety of services with the goal of providing the best possible education for the students being served. While some services may vary, most programs provide district or county-adopted curriculum for parents. Parents have access to textbooks, materials and supplies, teacher's editions, and teacher resource materials. Certificated teachers are involved in the programs, providing instructional support for both parents and students.

Development and Problems

Home schooling partnerships, to be effective, must be based on mutual respect between the educational agency and the home schooling family. Neither must forget that the goal of both groups is the best educational opportunities for the students involved. Educators must recognize that, whether or not they are in total agreement with the families who home school, the parents' primary concern is the best education for their children. Educators need to be flexible and willing to work with home schooling parents in a program that is mutually rewarding.

Programs which work with home schooling families grow out of a district's commitment to provide appropriate educational opportunities for all of the district's students. Home schooled students are one segment of the district's community for which appropriate educational opportunities can be provided. Districts frequently need to take the first step by inviting home schooling families to meet and discuss ways in which the district may assist them in teaching their children at home. The needs of home schooling families may vary from minimal curricular support to structured instructional assistance.

Once a need has been identified, the method of delivery of services must be determined. Probably the most appropriate mode is through independent study. This approach affords the home schooling family the greatest degree of flexibility in working with the district and allows the district to provide the many services available to all students enrolled in district programs. Home schooling families may be integrated into an existing independent study program or school. Districts may choose to establish a separate home schooling program apart from any other established alternative programs. In some instances, county offices of eduction have also chosen to establish programs which work closely with home schooling families.

As previously stated, the level of services to be provided home schooling families varies greatly. Many families have been home schooling and are comfortable with their established program. They may request use of district-adopted curriculum, including textbooks, instructional materials and supplies, and other related support materials. These families will develop their own daily schedules for working with their children and identify and organize the material to be covered in any given period of time. Other families, however, may require greater involvement with the instructional staff of the home schooling

partnership program. These families may be new to the concept of home schooling and, in addition to the instructional materials and supplies provided for their use, may depend on the instructional staff to develop daily, weekly, and/or monthly plans for progressing through the required material. They may also need assistance in developing activities that support and expand the learning opportunities for children. These activities may include art projects, science experiments, and field trips.

Home schooling families have the ideal situation for involving their students in field trip activities. These may be undertaken by individual families or several families may join together to make the field trip a group activity. Not restricted by the time constraints of the traditional school day or the limited funds available for school travel, home schooling families may, for example, take their children to the missions when studying California history, to the tide pools or the deserts when the wild flowers are blooming for science, to plays, the opera, or the symphony for music, to art galleries for art appreciation, and to any number of municipal meetings, including school board meetings, for political science and government. These field trip activities enrich the curriculum and provide students with "real life" experiences which bring their lessons alive.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of working with a home schooling partnership is developing and implementing group activities and programs for the students. These can include the publication of a student newspaper and/or yearbook, art, writing, and music fairs, craft days at the school or in a local park, and preparing and performing plays. One way to keep parents informed of all school activities is through a parent newsletter and calendar. Frequently parents will wish to assist with the writing and production of the newsletter.

In addition to working with families to provide educational assistance for their children, districts and/or county offices of education may support home schooling families by offering regular inservice programs. Home schooling partnership programs are able to establish parent groups which meet on a regular basis. The administrator of the program, working with the parents, can determine topics of interest to the parents and speakers can be identified to offer short programs covering the areas of interest. For example, an assistant superintendent for instruction may address the group on the adoption of a new sex education curriculum in the district, or a mentor teacher may provide inservice on new methods for teaching reading, math, or writing to students. The opportunities are endless and promote goodwill between the families and

the district. Meetings should be held at a time convenient for the greatest number of families and should be voluntary. A rotating schedule of evenings and/or Saturdays may provide opportunities to include greater numbers of families. It is important to consider providing structured activities for children of all ages during these meetings. The concept that family-based education includes the entire family should be an integral part of the program.

Many home schooling families, however, may choose not to participate in a home schooling partnership with a local school district or county office of education. Among those home schooling families who have left the public school system for religious reasons, there may be considerable concern that participation in such a partnership will result in the imposition of specific curriculum and the home schooling families will lose control over their child's education. It becomes the responsibility of the educational institution to provide a program that meets the district's requirements, yet is flexible enough to work with home schooling families in the areas of curriculum, instructional activities, and attendance. Opportunities should be provided for these families to observe the program, meet and discuss the program with participating parents, and meet with district personnel to share concerns. Every effort should be made to include all home schooling families in the partnership program. However, no program administrator or district personnel should feel offended if some families continue to choose to home school outside of the public school system.

Summary

In an era of public dissatisfaction with existing public education programs and the ever-present movement toward schools of choice and school vouchers, public school systems need to become increasingly more sensitive to the home schooling families within their districts. Perhaps it is time to embrace these students rather than alienating their families. The potential for success has been proven. If the mission is to provide a free public education for all students, then, just possibly, school restructuring efforts need to consider the needs of the home schooling families and develop mutually-acceptable programs. In the end, students learn and the district collects the ADA.

Implications for Training

Educational administration training programs are in a unique position to prepare future administrators to provide programs to meet the needs of at-risk students. Unfortunately, in most administrative training programs at-risk student needs and educational alternatives are not addressed. Instead, the focus of the business, personnel, curriculum, leadership and other related classes is on working with the mainstream student in the comprehensive program. While these may be the primary groups and settings with which future administrators may work, the increase in the drop-out rate, public dissatisfaction with the public school system, and the current focus on restructuring bring increased attention to the issues of at-risk students and educational alternatives.

The administrators prepared in these programs will fill the needs in comprehensive and alternative programs alike. The growing number of students who are identified "at-risk" make the possibility that alternative approaches to education will increase in number distinctly possible. Educational administration programs must begin to integrate the administration of alternative programs into the existing curriculum. This may be done through a specialized course in the administration of alternative programs or by integrating the unique needs of alternative education administration into the existing courses.

It is the responsibility of administrative training programs to take a leadership role in preparing creative and visionary managers. Colleges and universities cannot use the fact that districts and county offices of education directly served by these programs do not provide alternatives for at-risk students as an excuse for not integrating these issues into the curriculum. Their obligation is to prepare leaders who will have the sensitivity to identify the needs that exist and the vision to create programs responsive to those identified needs.

Students in administrative training programs need to be exposed to alternative programs, not only in the education classroom, but in the field as well. Students need to gain "hands-on" experience through field study assignments designed to support classroom instruction. The characteristics of at-risk students and the factors that result in at-risk behavior should be an integral part of administrative training programs. As instructional leaders,

administrators must be knowledgeable about at-risk students and strategies which may lead them to academic success.

Many of the administrators who will lead schools into the year 2000 and beyond are in training now. Their preparation must include exposure to innovative and creative methods for educating students; methods which recognize the unique needs of students in today's society, students who can be identified by one or more at-risk characteristics and whose behavior puts them in danger of failure.

Educational administration training programs need to be able to take a step into the future, analyze the challenges which will face administrators in the next century, and restructure programs to meet these challenges. This can only be done when those who teach in these programs recognize the necessity for change and take a leadership role in developing and implementing the change process.

Educating Homeless Students

This section of the paper provides background information on the homeless, an analysis of related educational policy and laws, an overview of the Steward B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, needs of homeless students, and a description of planning administrators should undergo to prepare to successfully serve homeless students. This information should be made available to practicing administrators, but even more critically, to the aspiring administrator since the numbers of homeless students in increasing each year. Widespread homelessness has become a feature of the American landscape. Although there have been homeless persons throughout the 20th century and before, the shrinking economy and declining social benefits, combined with increased housing costs and shortage of low-income housing, pushed an unprecedented number into the homeless ranks during the 1980's.

Background Information

The extent of homeless among the school-age population is unclear. The National Coalition for Homeless estimated the 1990 annual school-age population at 500,000 to 750,000. Approximately 43% of these were thought to be not attending school on a regular basis. As with other aspects of

enumerating the extent of homeless, the level of school enrollment of homeless children is disputed. A study conducted by the Stanford University Center for the Study of Families, Children, and Youth found that nearly 90% of homeless children were enrolled in school. A plausible explanation for the discrepancy between these reported enrollment figures is that the Stanford study primarily surveyed children living in shelters. While there is considerable disagreement regarding the number of homeless in America, there is general accord that families with children are increasingly represented in the growing homeless population. Of these homeless families, research suggests that more than three-fourths are typically single-parent families headed by women (Waxman & Reyes, 1990). Homelessness is a complex problem. The causes are myriad; no single factor or combination of factors can explain homelessness. The causes can include economic problems including unemployment or underemployment, or restrictions in social support programs. Causes can be related to personal problems including substance abuse, physical and or mental health, or family problems. No population is more at-risk of school failure, if not outright school exclusion, than the homeless. Homelessness places the educational opportunity of these students in jeopardy by creating formidable barriers associated with their homelessness (financial barriers and transiency) and those related to the organization of schools (residency requirements, transportation, attendance requirements, legal barriers, service impediments, social and psychological concerns, etc.).

Legal Barriers to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

The barriers of residency, guardianship, and immunization requirements arise from state legislation often reinforced by state administration or state education regulations.

Most states include in their compulsory attendance laws a provision specifying that all children must attend the school district where their parents reside and prohibit the enrollment of students who move without their parents into a district. Residency requirements pose problems for homeless students who are moved temporarily by a social service agency to a temporary quarter or whose family must divide up and live with several relatives in several districts. Many states mandate that students be registered by either parents or official guardians. When runaway youth apply for admission, guardians cannot sign,

and parents often will not cooperate in obtaining school records. Most states mandate the "no shots, no school" ruling. Students must present records of immunization against common communicable diseases before or very shortly after being admitted to school. Homeless children often have difficulty meeting this requirement. The availability of birth certificates and other school records can also be a barrier to school attendance for homeless children.

McKinney Act

The Steward B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 was the first real recognition by the federal government that homelessness was a problem deserving of national attention. The bill was passed over the objections of the Reagan administration. The bill was not passed as an effort to end homelessness but rather was an important first step in responding to the emergency needs of homeless people to prevent them from dying on the streets. It provides a general definition of a homeless person as one who (a) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or (b) lives in a shelter, an institution (other than a prison or other institutionalized facility), or (c) a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for human beings. The McKinney Act mandated the states review and revise residency requirements to ensure equal access of homeless children and youth to a free, appropriate public school. States must also address barriers in four additional areas including transportation, enrollment delays caused by immunization, residency requirements, lack of birth certificates, school records or other documentation, and guardianship issues. Separate schools for homeless children are often referred to as "transitional schools" and usually provide educational services on site at a shelter or where the homeless are residing (park, campground, motel, etc.). The opposition is virtually unanimous from McKinney project coordinators and homeless advocacy groups due to the fear of a segregated system of education determined by the housing status of students. Further it is believed that the public school systems hold the most promise for homeless children receiving the most comprehensive and highest quality education. Interagency cooperation is strongly endorsed through the McKinney legislation.

The Psychosocial Issues of Educating Homeless Children and Youth

Homelessness permeates the thinking and influences the behavior of each and every member of the family, including the child. Those experienced in dealing with homeless children recognize the development of a complex set of survival techniques as coping strategies rather than dysfunctional behaviors. These general problems experienced by homeless children often distort their attitudes about themselves and influence their interaction with others. Problems related to the child's perception of self may include shame, low self-esteem, depression, and a variety of phobias and irrational fears. They develop an impaired ability to trust that causes problems with the homeless child's relationships with others. It takes time to build trust, and time is not always a resource available to homeless children since they are often in one school but a short time before it is time to move on.

Problems with Scholastic Achievement

Because of sporadic school attendance often caused by difficulty sleeping in their temporary homes or numerous other problems, almost half of all homeless children are absent from school on any given day. Children who do attend school find that the developmental delays, inability to concentrate and their fears and anxieties make it difficult to learn. Teachers report that these children frequently do not finish their work since they often lack organizational skills and are taught to live for today. They often miss basic information as they move from school to school. Homework is often not completed because there is no place to complete it, no materials, and no one to help.

Remedies for Meeting the Needs of Homeless Children

Principals should anticipate the needs of homeless children attending their school before they arrive. They should review the school's enrollment procedure to make sure it is as easy and as uncomplicated and non-threatening as possible; plan responses if previous school records, immunization records, proof of residence, birth certificates, or other materials are not available; and identify ways that specialized assessment and placement and support services are made available as soon as possible after enrollment. Principals should

discuss ways they could provide remedial help with staff, solve transportation problems, secure free meals, school supplies, a place for and assistance with homework, and make arrangements for special tutoring if they are needed. The staff must be aware of the special needs of homeless students including the psychosocial issues and discuss ways that counseling might be provided for these students before the student arrives.

Conclusions

As human beings we tend to reject and stigmatize what we do not understand; awareness of the issues related to homelessness is critical. The increase in the numbers of homeless families with children has necessitated that administrators become familiar with the issues related to the education of the homeless and take a hard look at what they can do. It will be a concerned secretary, a sensitive and trained teacher, an involved guidance counselor, nurse, or other personnel who have been prepared by a well trained administrator who will make the difference for the homeless child through an effective educational program.

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